

March 19, 2012

**Connecticut Judiciary Committee**  
**EZ-ID Program**

House Bill No. 5507

I would like to thank the Chairmen and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee for the opportunity to speak regarding a piece of legislation that truly has the potential to save lives and in doing so, position Connecticut to lead the country in public safety.

My name is Jay Gardiner; I am the Director of the Molly Bish Center at Anna Maria College, Paxton, MA. The Molly Bish Center's primary goal is to deliver programs, conferences, trainings, and policies that enhance community safeguards. The Center's principal mission mirrors society's preeminent responsibility to ensure public safety.

The Center was established after the tragic abduction on June 27<sup>th</sup>, 2000 of Molly Ann Bish from her lifeguard post at Comins Pond in Warren MA. Her remains were discovered 3 years later, 5 miles from her home. You are most likely aware of the indelible story of Magi Bish. Magi drove her daughter to her summer job and saw a white sedan in the parking lot, looked directly at the driver but was not able to remember the plate. To quote Magi "Had the EZ-ID Program been in place, history may have been different." The search for Molly remains the largest in Massachusetts history.

It is through Magi and John Bish's tireless dedication, unwavering commitment, linear focus, and unequalled advocacy that remarkable strides in both policy and awareness have been achieved. On April 20, 2012, Magi Bish will receive an award here in Hartford by the local media for "Kids Camp." The Bish family are the catalyst behind the Amber Alert, Missing Children's Day, Children's Finger printing and ID kits, and the EZ-ID Program.

They represent and advocate for the families that have endured the unimaginable heartbreak of a missing child.

The statistics of adductions are sobering, unacceptable, and a compelling call to action.

- Every 40 seconds in the USA a child is reported missing or abducted
- Of the 800,000 children reported missing annually, @ 69,000 are abducted.
- More than 20% of the children reported to the Center for Missing and Exploited Children are found dead.

The public safety dividends of this initiative however extend well beyond child abductions to include drunken driving, road rage, stolen/suspicious vehicles; carjacking... 70% of all crimes involves a motor vehicle and the allocation of scarce law enforcement resources correlate with this demanding statistic. The ingenious simplicity of this program aligns the formatting of CT vehicle registrations utilizing symbols with

the human cognitive skills to assist law enforcement to rapidly respond and ultimately prevent crimes.

Simply put, the EZ-ID Program empowers the entire community, even children, to recognize, remember, and report motor vehicle plates. It restores plate formatting back to its original intent, public safety and allows individuals to take an active role. The program is designed to engage the community in a new level of heightened awareness, response, and reporting capacity. Michelle Cruz, Victim Advocate for the State of Connecticut, articulated the necessity of this public safety tool eloquently, "license plates, in their present format, give the illusion that motor vehicles are identifiable, when in fact they are not" Law enforcement at every level have testified that they are limited in their ability because they do not receive the critical information (plate #) to quickly resolve a crime. This program allows every member of the community to partner and participate with law enforcement.

Today offers each of you an unprecedented opportunity. In the state know for "The Land of Steady Habits," clearly this is a decision that will deliver results and promote safety. You have the opportunity to modernize a one hundred year old paradigm and establish an enhanced vehicle recognition system that will assuredly cascade across the country. Your regional partners (MA, RI, and VT) are also examining this policy.

The EZ-ID Program is simply in nature but, powerful in its ability to deliver results. Often, the role of government is to help people help themselves. I encourage you to move the legislation and help eliminate the need for Missing Children's Day and exponentially strengthen public safety in Connecticut. Making a difference is someone's life is powerful; saving a life is beyond measure.

Thank you and I look forward to working comprehensively with the Connecticut legislature and appropriate agencies to integrate this innovative and effective policy.